Association for the Development of Education in Africa

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

ON THE

PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTATION FORUM

1. Introduction

The theme of ADEA's 2011 Triennale is: P*romoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: how to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems?* Sustainable development in Africa which is at the core of the theme is imperative. Unfortunately, the current education and training policies and strategies are not responding effectively to the capacity development needs of African countries. Sustainable development is attainable only if African governments, in close partnership with other stakeholders, undertake necessary reforms by designing, building and implementing new education and training systems which take cognizance of individual and national development needs and have the capacity to produce relevant and high quality products. The objective of the consultation forum for private sector and civil society organizations was to enable them to be aware of the key role they are playing in the education and training area, give them a voice at the Triennale, create a common understanding of the challenges facing African countries in education and training, and explore a variety of practical options and inter-country synergies that can be presented to African leaders as a basis for policy dialogue. The 3-day forum, which was held in Tunisia, was declared open by the Tunisian Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Hon. Saïd Aïdi who acknowledged that his country had a high unemployment rate which was partly attributable to problems in the education and training system, especially to the lack of articulation between secondary, vocational and higher education; and a mismatch between education and training systems and jobs owing to lack of interaction with the business world.

2. Challenges faced by the Private Sector and CSOs in existing education and training systems

Although a plethora of factors are responsible for the inability of the African countries to meet their economic and social needs, capacity deficit certainly plays a key role. Hence, participants at the forum identified the following challenges, among others, in the education and training systems that do not allow African countries to meet their economic growth and sustainable development needs in an efficient way.

Lack of relevance of education and training systems: The skills which the education system produces are not aligned to the dire needs of the society and labor market. Implicitly, there is a disconnect between education and the labor market resulting in the paradox that although educational institutions are churning out thousands of graduates annually there is an acute shortage of the actual skills needed in the labor market. The mismatch is largely due to the fact that traditional courses are still predominant in vocational and technical training institutions while social sciences and humanities are the dominant courses in the universities with little emphasis on science and technology. It is also due to the lack of close and direct partnership of education systems with the private sector.

Supply-driven approach: The private sector is both the greatest consumer of educational products and the greatest producer of skills in the non-formal and informal training pathways and schemes. Yet, it has not been given the opportunity to influence the curricula in public institutions. Rather, curricula are determined by government officials who are generally distant from the realities of the labor market and the needs of the private sector.

Declining quality of education: Education systems do not produce what the consumers need and to that extent they do not meet the clients' quality dimension. Second, even when and where they produce the skills and competencies required such skills and competencies fall short of the standards required by the labor market. Retraining has to be done to achieve the desired standard.

Stakeholders and managers of education systems operate in silos: There is no real mechanism for effective dialogue between the Ministries in charge of education and training, and the private sector with the result that there is no structured information flow between the education systems and the labor market.

Dealing with varied interests: The current dysfunctional education and training systems had endured for so long because of the reluctance to challenge and reform them. The systems are plagued by inefficient management of resources, corruption and individual agendas of the development partners.

Neglect of training of artisans and farmers: Although over 80 percent of African economies (90% in many Sub-Saharan countries) are made up of the informal sector, including artisans, farmers, and small units of production and services; most governments do not pay enough attention to the training of artisans and farmers. As a matter of fact, in some countries it is not certain which Ministry has the responsibility for supporting the training of artisans and other occupational groups in the informal sector.

Insufficient vocational training institutions: Vocational training institutions are not sufficient in number, not well equipped in terms of faculty and infrastructure, and use obsolete training curricula. There is also the challenge of how to equate the qualifications awarded by the artisans with the official certifications and diplomas of the public institutions. There is a need for national and regional qualification frameworks for skills recognition in the formal as well as non formal and informal sectors.

Lack of life-long learning: There is insufficient training throughout life for the few salaried workers. Yet the ability of companies to compete effectively in the market, especially national or sub-regional markets, depends on the competence of their staff which is a function of training and development. Life-long training and capacity building are therefore imperative.

Limited education and training for girls: It is estimated that over 70% of girls do not enter the formal labor market. Consequently, increased focus, particularly of girls in rural communities and out of school, is required for the recognition of skills in the informal sector to ensure sustainability.

Financing: Reliance on only government for financial resources was considered unsustainable for systematic and continual training precisely because education and training needs are huge and beyond the capacity of government, which is largely responsible for formal education. In contrast, the private sector is largely responsible for the funding of non formal and informal education. Public-private partnerships seem to be lacking in both cases.

Lack of authority to implement policies: One of the challenges civil society organizations face is that they have no authority to implement policies nor can they compel government to implement their recommendations.

3. Current efforts at resolving existing challenges

Participants discussed current challenges and possible solutions to address them in their respective countries.

Strategic approach to skills development: In Mauritius, a human resource development council developed a human resource planning strategy that enables it to establish and communicate clear skills required, and also create milestones for continuous development. The organization is installing an online system that will enable employers input data directly into the system and obtain in return in real time information on labor mismatch.

Influencing the curricula of institutions: Employers' associations are collaborating with tertiary institutions to align curricula with the needs of the labor market. For instance, an employers' association in Ghana carried out a skills audit in order to establish the skills required by the various sectors of the economy and also provides information on employers' needs to educational institutions with a view to influencing policy making, curriculum development and training service delivery.

Retraining: In view of the fact that many graduates from tertiary institutions have no skills, some employers' associations are providing practical training for such graduates to enable them acquire skills that will qualify them for employment. The emphasis is on acquisition of skills.

Artisan training: Some organizations are redesigning their traditional training practices to provide apprentices the kind of skills required in the labor market. In one particular case a renewed apprenticeship scheme prepares apprentices for national examinations to enable them to qualify for a certificate of competence (CQP).

Public-Private Partnerships: A national confederation of employers outlined how it had influenced reforms in education and training in its country through the establishment of: a governance partnership, a national commission for consultation, and a national commission for certification of degrees and certificates. Part of the reforms also included a shift of emphasis to skills acquisition, and facilitation of learners' entry into working life.

Civil Society organizations' role: They are involved in the implementation of education policies; checking aid efficiency, ensuring access of girls in the rural areas and the educationally disabled; monitoring budgets earmarked for education; engaging the private sector; and pursuing an inclusive approach in the development of curricula in order to ensure relevance to societal needs. Civil society organizations are also promoting gender equity; pursuing the mainstreaming of gender in all processes though advocacy; engaging and mobilizing communities; and empowering children to solve problems. Ownership is important; reforms cannot work well without the involvement of communities

4. A Framework for Paradigm Shift and Key Messages for the Triennale

All the discussions and debate at the consultation forum culminated in a number of key messages which indicate that a paradigm shift in the education and training systems should be a transformation from: instruction to learning; acquisition of certificates and degrees to acquisition of recognized learning that has utilitarian value for society; supply-driven to demand-driven approach; and a centralized institutional management to partnership management characterized by decentralization and local partnership. The key messages are as follows:

Civil Society Organizations

Message 1. Education system reform: the driver of change: In order to successfully carry out reforms in the education system the following actions will have to be taken: (i) Revise the regulatory framework to meet societal, economic and environmental challenges and rethink skills on the basis of regional structure and population; (ii) Take advantage of institutional strengths to initiate a process of change and prepare skills for the knowledge economy; and (iii) Reformulate the principles of governance to enhance dialogue and consultation.

Message 2. The sustainable development of Africa requires above all a jointly formulated vision of the continent's future that is shared by all stakeholders: This is will involve: (i) A common understanding of the issues and challenges of sustainable development; (ii) The identification of Africa's potential and assets; (iii) The mapping of the resources to be developed; (iv) An agreement on development priorities, policies and strategies, and the respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders; and (v) A roadmap or strategy for the implementation of the vision.

Message 3. Taking account of the conclusions of the 2008 Maputo Biennale, and convinced that African states need to design and develop education and training systems that will enable them to meet the challenges of their future development, the Forum proposes that a strategic framework for the development of competencies in education and training be established in each country.

This framework should: (i) Take account of current and future needs in terms of capacity building for communities, financial support to civil society organizations, and promotion of the private sector; (ii) Define mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability; and (iii) Take account of the diversity of education and training needs as well as the diversity of responses to these needs, notably those made by civil society organizations and the private sector.

Message 4. Public institutions, the private sector, civil society should UNDERTAKE TO WORK TOGETHER

They should formulate and adopt a charter of partnership-based governance for an effective education and training system. (i) Formulate and manage education and training policies that promote economic and social integration; and (ii) Tackle the challenges of equity, gender, rural areas and marginalized groups.

Message 5. Diverse needs in technical and vocational skills training call for multifaceted responses and strategies.

In order to customize responses and strategies according diverse national needs: (i) Governments must recognize the diversity of the technical skills and vocational training required for economic growth in Africa; (ii) Different beneficiaries have different training needs that should be taken into consideration, including the gender dimension; (iii) Stakeholders in education and training have different strengths and therefore can play different roles; and (iv) Each separate need requires an appropriate response.

Private Sector Organizations

Message 6: Vocational training systems should be designed to produce the skills needed by the private sector. In other words, vocational training should shift from a supply-driven approach to a demand-driven approach. The acquisition of critical skills and competencies should be regarded as an integral part of both "basic education" and "post-basic education" because such an orientation ensures a holistic perspective of education and skills development. An integrated system would comprise TVET,

apprenticeship/intermittent education and non-formal pre-vocational education that is implemented in partnership with the private sector with a view to responding to development and equity needs respectively.

Message 7: Encouragement should be given to South-South cooperation in terms of exchanges of information, expertise and experience among the stakeholders in vocational training in Africa, who have common challenges, expectations and needs.

Message 8: The value chain of vocational training is everybody's business. All stakeholders in vocational training (governments and their agencies, social partners, organizations representing the private sector, economic agents) must apply themselves to the task of training young people and integrating them into the workforce, reaping the benefits individually and collectively.

Message 9: Re-orientation of the training system toward job-related skills is the best way to overcome the mismatch between training and employment and to optimize investment in skills development.

Message 10: Combating unemployment requires encouraging and disseminating an entrepreneurial culture in all vocational training mechanisms.

Message 11: To confront the challenge of unemployment among young Africans with higher education degrees, systems of support and professionalization should be designed and implemented specifically for these young people, notably through cooperation between the academic and business worlds.

Message 12: Vocational training should be financed through three main channels: foreign investment, in order to promote local development; employers and business organizations, which should be given tax incentives to encourage them to become involved in training; and governments, which should ensure that the proceeds of the apprenticeship and continuing education tax actually go toward training.

Message 13: In order to make up for the inadequacies of African training systems, it is vital for the relations between public and private partners to adhere to good governance based on rigor, equity and transparency between partners.

Message 14: Trainers in the informal economy and rural areas should be given access to means of strengthening their technical and teaching capacity, in order to improve the training they impart to the young people under their responsibility.

The Tunisian Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Hon. Saïd Aïdi, who opened the forum, was present at the presentation of the key messages noted that all the messages were relevant and said he was prepared to inform other African Ministers of Education in writing how impressed he was with the forum. Messages of the forum were to be disseminated through various media - posters, banners, networks, websites and internet - in order to create awareness in the various countries before the Triennale.